

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 089703

62

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, NATO

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT

REF: STATE 88257

1. FOLLOWING TEXT OF SCHLESINGER LETTER TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, WHICH WAS ALSO RELEASED TO PRESS APRIL 29, SHOULD BE CIRCULATED TO DUTCH, BELGIAN, NORWEGIAN AND DANISH DELEGATIONS:

2. "DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: MY ANNUAL DEFENSE DEPARTMENT REPORT FOR 1975 NOTED THE HIGH INVESTMENT COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 089703

TACTICAL AIR FORCES AND MY INTENTION TO ALLEVIATE THIS

PROBLEM BY ACTIVELY PURSUING NEW ALTERNATIVES WHICH CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE AT A LOWER COST WHILE MAINTAINING A CREDIBLE TACTICAL FORCE. THE MOST ACTIVE PROGRAM DIRECTED TOWARD SUCH AN ALTERNATIVE IS THE AIR FORCE LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER (LWF) PROGRAM AND THE FY 75 PROGRAM FOR THE AIR COMBAT FIGHTER (ACF), A MISSIONIZED FIGHTER DERIVED FROM THE LWF.

3. "I HAVE FOLLOWED THIS PROGRAM CLOSELY AND AM CONVINCED THAT IT IS APPROPRIATE TO CONSIDER FULL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND EVENTUAL PRODUCTION OF AN ACF-TYPE AIRCRAFT. THE CURRENT FLIGHT TESTING PROGRAMS FOR BOTH THE YF-16 AND YF-17 LWF PROTOTYPES SHOULD PERMIT US TO SELECT THE MORE PROMIS-

ING OF THESE TWO CANDIDATE AIRCRAFT IN FY 1975 AND TO PROCEED INTO ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT IN PREPARATION FOR A POSSIBLE PRODUCTION DECISION OF AN ACF AS EARLY AS CY 1977 OR 1978.

3. "PREPARATION FOR ENTRY INTO ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT IN LATE FY 75 WILL CONSIST OF EQUIPMENT, PERFORMANCE AND COST TRADE-OFF ANALYSES AS WELL AS EVALUATION OF FLIGHT TEST RESULTS TO DEVELOP THE CONFIGURATION OF THE ACF. THE 36 MILLION DOLLARS REQUESTED IN THE FY 75 BUDGET IS NECESSARY TO PERMIT US TO TAKE THESE PREPARATORY STEPS. WE MUST MAINTAIN THE FULL 36 MILLION DOLLARS REQUESTED FOR THE ACF IN THE FY 75 BUDGET TO PROVIDE US THIS OPTION AND TO MAINTAIN PROGRAM MOMENTUM AND CONTINUITY.

4. "WHILE WE CLEARLY HAVE NOT MADE A FINAL DECISION TO PROCEED INTO PRODUCTION OF THE ACF, I AM CONVINCED THAT THE CONTINUING NEED FOR MODERNIZATION AND POSSIBLE EXPANSION NO ONLY OF OUR TACTICAL AIR FORCES BUT ALSO OF THOSE OF OUR ALLIES RE-EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING AVAILABLE A LOWER COST FIGHTER OPTION. I FORESEE TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL FOR FOREIGN SALES OF THIS TYPE AIRCRAFT PARTICULARLY IF WE FULLY SUPPORT SUCH A PROGRAM.

5. "THE AIR FORCE HAS DEVELOPED A PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION PLAN CONSISTENT WITH THEIR FULL SUPPORT OF THE PROGRAM AND THE OBJECTIVE OF A FULL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 STATE 089703

DECISION LATE IN FY 75. WE WILL BE HAPPY TO BRIEF YOU ON THIS PLAN AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.

6. "I FULLY APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT YOU HAVE PROVIDED TO THE DEPARTMENT IN THE PAST AND IN THE INTEREST SHOWN IN THE LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER CONCEPT. I SINCERELY HOPE THAT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS LETTER AND THE OPPORTUNITIES AFFORDED BY BOTH THE LWF AND ACF PROGRAMS AS CARRIED IN OUR

FY 75 PROGRAM WILL WARRANT YOUR FULL SUPPORT. THE RE-SOURCES REQUESTED IN THESE TWO PROGRAMS WILL PROVIDE US WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROCEED TOWARD AN ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT DECISION DURING FY 75." RUSH

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